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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001183

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AFIS AND DRL/IL, NSC FOR SENIOR AF DIRECTOR  
FRAZER, LONDON FOR CGURNEY, PARIS FOR CNEARY, NAIROBI FOR  
PFLAUMER, BRUSSELS FOR USEU:WAGNER, GENEVA FOR HAGEN

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SUBJECT: ZCTU'S BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL AT THE UPCOMING ILO  
CONFERENCE

Classified By: Classified by KRBel for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) This is an action request -- see paragraph 6.

2. (C) Summary. LABOFF met May 15 with Wellington Chibebe of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Chibebe expressed concern that the GOZ would use the upcoming ILO conference in Geneva as another forum in which to attack the legitimacy of his organization. Chibebe requested assistance to enable him to attend the conference along with ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo (Matombo's travel costs have already been covered). Additionally, Chibebe requested our assistance in mobilizing support for ZCTU's official delegate status should the GOZ attempt to appoint as the "official" Zimbabwean labor delegate another labor organization it created to counter the ZCTU's broad influence. End summary.

3. (C) In the course of a meeting with Laboff, Wellington Chibebe, Secretary General of the ZCTU, stated that he has been informed that both ZCTU and the GOZ-sponsored Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) would be allowed by the GOZ to travel to Geneva for the upcoming ILO congress. The ZFTU is a shell organization created by ZANU-PF/GOZ as a more controllable counterpart to the legitimate ZCTU. The ZFTU has used strong-arm tactics against employers to convince workers to join up, but thus far the only group with widescale membership in the ZFTU is the sugar plantation workers. Within that industry, the GOZ has reportedly pressured the employers while the ZFTU has coerced the workers, with the result being a mass shift of workers' allegiance (as well as their membership dues) from the ZCTU-affiliated sugar workers' union to the ZFTU. While the true size of the organization as well as its leadership is unclear, "war vet" Joseph Chinotimba, self-proclaimed commander of the farm invasions and ZANU-PF's chief worker bee and enforcer, is the ZFTU's vice president.

4. (C) The GOZ has not yet indicated which organization will receive government appointment as the official Zimbabwean delegation, and Chibebe believes that the GOZ may postpone announcing its intentions until the last possible minute. Chibebe's concern is that the GOZ may well appoint the ZFTU as the official delegation while relegating the ZCTU to an "advisory" role. If this happens, the ZCTU will dispute the appointment and the matter will go to the ILO Accreditation Committee, which is chaired by Benin. Chibebe is concerned that politics may win the day and that ZFTU may prevail in an accreditation fight. Late reports on May 17 indicate that the GOZ intends to invite both ZCTU and ZFTU to the Geneva meeting as if they had equal status.

5. (C) Post is already investigating possible means of sponsoring Chibebe to attend the conference along with ZCTU president Lovemore Matombo, whose attendance has already been funded by other sponsors. However, ZCTU is under severe financial pressure and does not have the money to send Chibebe outright. Chibebe can offer vital assistance by lobbying for support for the ZCTU among the other delegates, in the event that such a showdown develops. Further, even if such a struggle does not develop, Chibebe's attendance will enhance his international profile and confirm the USG's support for the ZCTU.

6. (C) Action requested: Post recommends that Solidarity Center be contacted to sponsor Chibebe's travel to the ILO meeting. Post also recommends that the Department and/or DOL approach other international labor groupings and delegates to solicit their support that the ZCTU be recognized as Zimbabwe's official delegation. In addition to weighing in with the ICFTU, it will be important to address our concerns to other national and regional labor organizations. As Chibebe noted, Mugabe is willing to play the "race card" without compunction, and pressure from a western labor group alone could play into Mugabe's "African unity" rhetoric. Other groups which could be approached include WCL, SATUCC, ICFTU-Afro, OAUTU (Organization of African Unity Trade Unions), and COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions).

7. (C) Suggested talking points:

-- We understand the GOZ may be planning to accredit the

ZFTU, an organization created by and controlled by the Zimbabwean government and ZANU-PF, at the upcoming International Labor Congress. This would relegate the ZCTU, the ILO-accredited representative of Zimbabwean labor, an affiliate of the ICFTU and the legitimate representative of the vast majority of Zimbabwean workers, to an "advisory" role.

-- Such an outcome would be a violation of the principles of democratically free trade unionism which the ILO supports.

-- Such an action would also indicate the desire of the Zimbabwean government to bring the Zimbabwean labor movement under government/party control and to impose political retribution on the ZCTU and its members for allegedly opposing Mugabe and Zanu-PF in the recent flawed presidential elections.

-- The USG supports the ZCTU's effort to retain its legitimate seat in the International Labor Congress and to reject efforts to designate a government-puppet labor organization as a labor federation with full ILO recognition.

-- We urge the ICFTU (or insert appropriate other organization) to back official accreditation of the ZCTU in the ILO as well and to urge its affiliates to stand behind the ZCTU as the legitimate representation of organized labor in Zimbabwe.

End suggested points.  
SULLIVAN